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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-11 are Cancelled.

12. (Original) A method of allocating orders, comprising:

receiving over a network order information for a plurality of users' orders, wherein at least a portion of the order information is based on information scanned from disposed of items;

accessing from a computer accessible memory first pricing information based at least in part on the order information;

automatically grouping a portion of the orders into a first group based on at least a first characteristic;

setting a maximum acceptable bid price based at least in part on the first pricing information;

receiving over the network quotes from suppliers for the first group of orders;

selecting at least one supplier based on the quotes; and

placing the first group of orders with the selected supplier.

13. (Original) The method as defined in Claim 12, wherein the first characteristic is requested delivery date.

14. (Original) The method as defined in Claim 12, wherein the first characteristic is order date.

15. (Original) The method as defined in Claim 12, wherein the first characteristic is commonality of ordered items.

16. (Original) The method as defined in Claim 12, wherein the first characteristic is geographical location.

17. (Original) The method as defined in Claim 12, wherein a discount from the selected supplier is applied proportionally to the first group of orders.

18. (Original) An apparatus configured to allocate orders, comprising:

a network interface configured to be coupled to a plurality of waste disposal units;

a processor coupled to the network interface;

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a first instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to receive content information from the plurality of waste disposal units;

a second instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to generate user orders based at least in part on the content information;

a third instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to group a portion of the orders into a first group based on at least a first characteristic;

a fourth instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to process quotes from suppliers for the first group of orders; and

a fifth instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to select at least one supplier based on the quotes.

19. (Original) The apparatus as defined in Claim 18, further comprising a sixth instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to place the first group of orders with the selected suppler.

20. (Original) The apparatus as defined in Claim 19, further comprising a seventh instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to apply a discount from the selected suppler the first group of orders.

21. (Original) The apparatus as defined in Claim 18, wherein the first characteristic is requested delivery date.

22. (Original) The apparatus as defined in Claim 18, wherein the first characteristic is order date.

23. (Original) The apparatus as defined in Claim 18, wherein the first characteristic is commonality of ordered items.

24. (Original) The apparatus as defined in Claim 18, wherein the first characteristic is geographical location.

25. (Currently amended) An electronic discard unit comprising:

a processor unit;

an identification database accessible by the processor unit;

a content database accessible by the processor unit;

at least one input device coupled to the processor unit;

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the processor unit executing programmatic software to perform functions including:

using the at least one input device to scan a code corresponding to a discarded item;

identifying the discarded item by referring to the identification database, and if a match is not found within the identification database, by searching over a computer network for a match;

updating the content database to include an entry corresponding to the identified discarded item;

generating a re-order instruction for replacing the discarded item; and

a presence sensor that, at least partly in response to detecting an approaching person, initiates scanning of the discarded item code; and

a closure mechanism that supports the discarded item while the at least one input device obtains the code corresponding to the discarded item and that opens after the at least one input device obtains the code.

26. (Previously presented) The electronic discard unit as defined in Claim 25, wherein the presence sensor is a motion detector.

27. (Previously presented) The electronic discard unit as defined in Claim 25, wherein the at least one input device includes a bar code scanner.

28. (Currently amended) The An electronic discard unit as defined in Claim 25, further comprising:

a processor unit;

an identification database accessible by the processor unit;

a content database accessible by the processor unit;

·at least one input device coupled to the processor unit;

the processor unit executing programmatic software to perform functions including:

using the at least one input device to scan a code corresponding to a discarded item;

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identifying the discarded item by referring to the identification database, and if a match is not found within the identification database, by searching over a computer network for a match;

updating the content database to include an entry corresponding to the identified discarded item;

generating a re-order instruction for replacing the discarded item;

a presence sensor that, at least partly in response to detecting an approaching person, initiates scanning of the discarded item code;

a user operated bypass control which causes at least one discarded item to be deposited in a first receptacle without reference to the at least one discarded item identification code;

a stored user preference readable by the processor unit that includes a preference related to shopping delivery timing and identifying a preferred supplier;

a closure mechanism that supports the discarded item while the at least one input device obtains the code corresponding to the discarded item and that opens after the at least one input device obtains the code; and

a display, wherein the processor unit executes programmatic software to perform the function of displaying a price of the discarded item on the display.

29. (Previously presented) The electronic discard unit as defined in Claim 25, further comprising a user operated bypass control which causes at least one discarded item to be deposited in a first receptacle without reference to the at least one discarded item code.

30. (Previously presented) The electronic discard unit as defined in Claim 25, further comprising a stored user preference readable by the processor unit which includes a value related to shopping delivery timing.

31. (Previously presented) The electronic discard unit as defined in Claim 25, further comprising a stored user preference readable by the processor unit which includes data identifying a preferred supplier.

32. (Canceled)

33. (Previously presented) The electronic discard unit as defined in Claim 25, further comprising:

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a display; and

software that performs the function of displaying a price of the discarded item.

34. (Currently amended) A method of disposing of an item using an electronic trash unit having a storage bin comprising:

sensing a presence of at least one of a user or the item;

initiating item scanning at least partly in response to the sensed presence;

scanning the item for a machine readable code;

storing the machine readable code in an electronic storage medium;

reading user preference data, including selection criteria for determining to which entity a re-order is to be placed;

selecting the entity to whom the order is to be placed based at least in part on the selection criteria, wherein the selection criteria includes price;

generating a re-order instruction for the item based on the machine readable code and on at least a portion of the user preference data;

storing the item in the storage bin; and

updating a content database with information regarding the item.

35. (Currently amended) ~~The method as defined in Claim 34, further comprising:~~ A method of disposing of an item using an electronic trash unit having a storage bin, comprising:

sensing a presence of at least one of a user or the item;

initiating item scanning at least partly in response to the sensed presence;

scanning the item for a machine readable code;

storing the machine readable code in an electronic storage medium;

reading user preference data, including selection criteria for determining to which entity a re-order is to be placed;

selecting the entity to whom the order is to be placed based at least in part on the selection criteria;

generating a re-order instruction for the item based on the machine readable code and on at least a portion of the user preference data;

storing the item in the storage bin; and

updating a content database with information regarding the item;
determining a price for the item; and

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displaying the price on a display mounted on the electronic trash unit.

36. (Previously presented) The method as defined in Claim 34, further comprising:

receiving a user generated bypass command; and

causing a second item to be stored in a second storage bin in response to the bypass command.

37. (Previously presented) The method as defined in Claim 34, further comprising:

scanning a second item for a second machine readable code;

determining that the second machine readable code is unavailable;

informing a user of the unavailability of the second machine readable code; and

receiving a code corresponding to the second item manually entered by the user.

38. (Previously presented) The method as defined in Claim 34, further comprising attempting to identify the item by referring to a local database, and if the attempted identification fails, attempting to identify the item by searching over a computer network.

39. (Cancelled)

40. (Previously presented) The method as defined in Claim 34, further comprising:

accessing a user delivery preference; and

causing the item to be delivered based at least in part on the user preference.

41. (Previously presented) The method as defined in Claim 34, wherein the preference data further includes an order trigger, wherein the order trigger is based on at least one of date, order value, and elapse of a specified time period.

42. (Previously presented) The method as defined in Claim 34, wherein presence is sensed using a motion detector.

43. (Currently amended) An information processing system associated with a user, comprising:

a scanner system configured to scan a code on items;

a network interface coupled to the scanner system, the network interface configured to transmit and receive information over a network;

a database storing information related to items consumed by the user, and profile information associated with the user;

instructions stored in computer readable memory configured to:

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determine when a first consumed item is to be replenished based at least in part on the database information; ~~and~~

to provide at least a portion of the database information to at least a first supplier so that the first supplier can predict inventory needs;

receive from the scanner system information scanned from a bill; and

receive authorization from the user to have the bill paid.

44. (Previously presented) The system as defined in Claim 43, wherein the profile includes a user delivery preference.

45. (Previously presented) The system as defined in Claim 43, wherein the profile includes a user shipping preference.

46. (Previously presented) The system as defined in Claim 43, wherein the profile includes an order trigger.

47. (Previously presented) The system as defined in Claim 43, wherein the profile includes a supplier preference.

48. (Previously presented) The system as defined in Claim 43, wherein the first supplier is at least one of a retailer, a wholesaler, or a delivery service entity.

49. (Previously presented) The system as defined in Claim 43, wherein the information provided to at the at least first supplier does not uniquely identify the user.

50. (Previously presented) The system as defined in Claim 43, wherein the information provided to at the at least first supplier is provided in aggregation with information for other users so the users cannot be identified by the first supplier.

51.   (Cancelled)

52. (Currently amended) A method of providing information useable to predict inventories, comprising:

receiving over a network information related to a least a first item being discarded by a user;

retrieving profile information from a user database, the profile information including a least one of a delivery or a shipping preference associated with the user; ~~and~~

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providing over a network at least a portion of the received information relating to the first item and to the profile to at least a first entity so that the first entity can predict inventory needs;

      receiving information scanned by the user from a bill using a scanner;

      receiving authorization from the user to have the bill paid; and

      causing the bill to be paid.

53. (Previously presented) The method as defined in Claim 52, wherein the profile includes a supplier preference.

54. (Previously presented) The method as defined in Claim 52, wherein the first entity is at least one of a retailer, a wholesaler, or a delivery service entity.

55. (Cancelled)

56. (Previously presented) An apparatus configured to allocate orders, comprising:

a network interface configured to be coupled to a plurality of scanners associated with a plurality of users;

a processor coupled to the network interface;

a first instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to receive information scanned from a plurality of items being disposed of;

a second instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to generate user orders based at least in part on the scanned information;

a third instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to group a portion of the users' orders into a first group based on at least a first characteristic;

a fourth instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to process quotes from suppliers for the first group of orders; and

a fifth instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to select at least one supplier based on the quotes.

57. (Previously presented) The apparatus as defined in Claim 56, further comprising a sixth instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to place the first group of orders with the selected suppler.

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58. (Previously presented) The apparatus as defined in Claim 56, further comprising a seventh instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to apply a discount from the selected suppler the first group of orders.

59. (Previously presented) The apparatus as defined in Claim 56, wherein the first characteristic is requested delivery date.

60. (Previously presented) The apparatus as defined in Claim 56, wherein the first characteristic is order date.

61. (Previously presented) The apparatus as defined in Claim 56, wherein the first characteristic is commonality of ordered items.

62. (Previously presented) The apparatus as defined in Claim 56, wherein the first characteristic is geographical location.

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